

VZCZCXRO3360

PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHDH RUEHIHL RUEHKUK

DE RUEHGB #2810/01 2921212

ZNY CCCCC ZZH

P 191212Z OCT 09

FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5146

INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RHMFIS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

RHMFIS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002810

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/18/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PINS](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: BARZANI ON NINEWA: KRG PRESIDENT LOOKS WEST

Classified By: DCM Robert Ford for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

**¶11. (C) Summary:** During a joint MND-N DCG and Ninewa PRT Team Leader engagement on October 7, KRG President Barzani observed that security differences between the GOI and the KRG in disputed areas would not be solved without the presence of U.S. forces (USF). He expressed appreciation for joint ISF/USF Mosul Dam security arrangements and called Mosul "the center for Arab chauvinism." Barzani shared a favorable impression of Ninewa Governor al-Nujaifi, agreeing that the situation had improved in the province, but took exception to the governor's request for freedom of movement throughout disputed areas. He characterized DPM Issawi, who leads the GOI's effort to achieve a power sharing agreement between the (Sunni Arab) al-Hadba Gathering and (Kurdish) Ninewa Fraternal League in Ninewa's Provincial Council (PC), as a fair and balanced mediator; however, he carefully avoided saying if and when the Kurdish-led boycott of the PC might end. End summary.

U.S. FORCES KEY TO PROGRESS IN DIBS

**¶12. (C)** On October 7, Ninewa PRT Team Leader joined MND North's Deputy CG, BG Robert Brown, on the latter's farewell call with KRG President Masoud Barzani. The meeting and lunch discussion, primarily covering Ninewa security and political developments, took place at Barzani's Salah Ad Din office complex outside Erbil. While BG Brown focused on security issues, PRT TL took advantage of the opportunity to solicit Barzani's views of (and offer observations on) political developments in Ninewa. Barzani observed that security differences between the GOI and the KRG in the disputed areas would not be solved without the presence of USF, and expressed appreciation for joint ISF/USF Mosul Dam security arrangements.

AL-NUJAIFI MORE PRAGMATIC; ISSAWI A CREDIBLE MEDIATOR

**¶13. (C)** PRT TL offered to Barzani that Ninewa Provincial Governor Atheel al-Nujaifi and his governing al-Hadba List were increasingly pragmatic, demonstrating (by contrast with previous rhetoric) an increased focus on governance, delivery of services and cooperation with the USG. Despite referring to Mosul as "the center for Arab chauvinism," Barzani agreed that governance had improved in Ninewa, adding that he had recently developed a more favorable impression of al-Nujaifi.

**¶14. (C)** Addressing encounters he and other members of the KRG's leadership had with Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) Rafi al-Issawi, who leads the GOI's effort to achieve a power sharing agreement between al-Hadba the NFL, Barzani said he found the DPM a fair and balanced mediator with good intentions. Barzani concurred that the DPM-led dialogue must take advantage of current momentum before the Iraqi national election delayed progress or undercut a resolution to the Kurd boycott of the Provincial Council (PC). (Comment: Barzani nonetheless displayed far less enthusiasm for a quick resolution to the NFL's boycott of the PC than he did

for a joint security architecture in the DIBs. End Comment.)

BARZANI DISPUTES AL-NUJAIFI'S FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

-----

¶5. (C) Barzani did not concur with al-Nujaifi's suggestion, relayed by PRT TL, that freedom of movement for the provincial government throughout Ninewa would be an important sign of KRG good faith that could encourage reciprocal compromises. (Note: Kurdish security forces have on several occasions blocked al-Nujaifi and other Ninewa officials from traveling in the disputed areas. End Note.) Claiming that local populations had a say in the matter, Barzani said freedom of movement would come "at the same time there is a resolution to the disputed areas." (Comment: A problematic position, and one that contradicts the right to freedom of movement enshrined in Iraq's constitution. End comment.)

NINEWA PC DYSFUNCTIONAL

-----

¶6. (C) PRT TL observed that the rump Ninewa Provincial Council was essentially dysfunctional. While the PC can legally act with just its Arab majority, the body lacked the ability to adequately debate issues, properly execute a budget or represent Ninewa's diverse population. Barzani expressed dismay that Sunni Arabs had, in the immediate aftermath of the provincial election, shut out the NFL from any leadership positions, and noted that the Kurdish majority in Kirkuk had by contrast agreed to share power with Arabs there. PRT TL and BG Brown offered that the al-Hadba appeared to have recognized that taking all the leadership positions had been a mistake, and that the NFL appeared to

BAGHDAD 00002810 002 OF 002

now regret that the boycott, which had made its point, was now hindering development in the province.

¶7. (C) Barzani said Vice President Biden's recent visit to the KRG had been "an excellent opportunity" for the Kurds, adding that he would like to return to Washington "whenever there is an invitation." On domestic Iraqi politics, recent coalition announcements had kicked off the national election season, but it would take considerable time for the plethora of political parties and alliances to sort themselves out.

¶8. (C) Comment: Barzani demonstrated a clear and intimate knowledge of Ninewa's leaders and political dynamics. Reiterating familiar Kurdish positions on past grievances and ill-treatment at the hands of Ninewa's Sunni Arabs, he held his cards closely on if and when the Kurdish-led boycott of the PC would end. Nonetheless, his expression of support for DPM Issawi's mediation effort struck us as significant; he was clearly interested in our assessment that al-Hadba and NFL representatives had expressed satisfaction with their direct dialogue. Barzani's linking of al-Nujaifi's request for freedom of movement to resolution of disputed areas stood in contrast to the agreement among participants in Issawi's mediation process that Ninewa's provincial government should have administrative authority over the entire province and the ability to move within it. End Comment.

FORD